

# if you can make it there . . .

The New York and Santa Fe art worlds have long been intertwined, far beyond the "Southwestern art" connection.

BY KIRK ELLIS

If there's one place Santa Fe would like to be—artistically speaking, that is—it's New York City. But Manhattan has long reciprocated the fascination, and it seems ironic that discussions of the fabled Santa Fe and Taos art "schools" so often overlook the fact that many of the Southwestern movements' founders came to New Mexico from east of the Mississippi.

Ernest Blumenschein and Andrew Dasburg had already established themselves as prominent New York artists by the time of their first visits to the Southwest; so had Marsden Hartley, Robert Henri, and photographer Paul Strand. Taos Society painters E. Irving Couse, Walter Ufer, Victor Higgins, and E. Martin Hennings studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and were intimately familiar with the commercial East Coast art world.

The long-distance marriage of Wisconsin-born Georgia O'Keeffe and her mentor/husband Alfred Stieglitz (founder of New York's 291 gallery) still provides the paradigm for the sometimes envious—or at least ambivalent—relationship between the two major art centers. O'Keeffe made her first extended trip to New Mexico in the spring of 1929, largely to escape the smothering influence of her husband's family and colleagues, who congregated at his Lake George vacation home in upstate New York. Though the couple remained together until Stieglitz's death in 1946, O'Keeffe divided her time between New Mexico (which she came to call her "faraway nearby") and New York; Stieglitz never visited New Mexico, and exhibited O'Keeffe's work exclusively in his Manhattan galleries. "I am divided between my man and a life with him," O'Keeffe wrote to artist Russell Vernon Hunter in 1932 in her signature staccato style, "—and something of the outdoors—that is in my blood—and that I know I will never get rid of—I have to get along with my divided self the best I can."

Echoes of that can't-live-with-New-York/can't-live-without-it contradiction often resound in conversations with prominent Santa Fe dealers. "In the contemporary art world, you can have a

measure of financial success without New York representation, but you haven't really 'made it,' " asserts Linda Durham, one of a growing number of art dealers whose efforts have placed Santa Fe on the national and international art maps. "A lot of people would say they don't care, but New York City is the center of the art world." According to Diane Karp, director of the Santa Fe Art Institute, "Santa Fe has long marched out beyond its own borders. Artists come

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COURTESY OF LINDA DURHAM CONTEMPORARY ART

Above: The Linda Durham Gallery in New York is known for its stable of New Mexico-based painters and sculptors.

Below left: Sonya Sklaroff shows her paintings to U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman. The works are part of the Santa Fe Arts Institute's exchange program with New York City artists.



COURTESY OF SANTA FE ART INSTITUTE